

BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENT CONFERENCE REPORT

SUBJECT: Monthly SHPO-FHWA-ACOE-NHDOT Cultural Resources Meeting

DATE OF CONFERENCES: June 10, 2021

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: John O. Morton Building

Due to the Covid 19 Event, this meeting was a scheduled Zoom Meeting

ATTENDED BY:

NHDOT

Sheila Charles

Ron Crickard

Meli Dube

Mike Dugas

Jill Edelmann

Rebecca Martin

Mike Mozer

Dan Prehemo

Jennifer Reczek

Corey Spetelunas

Hans Weber

NHDHR/NHDNCR

Laura Black

Mark Doperalski

Consulting Party

Liz Liacos, Chester Historical Society

PROJECTS/PRESENTATIONS REVIEWED THIS MONTH:

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Chester 41848, X-A004(761)

Participants: Ron Crickard, Mike Dugas, Rebecca Martin, Corey Spetelunas, NHDOT; Liz Liacos, President Chester Historical Society/Consulting Party

Continued consultation on the Highway Safety Improvement Project at the intersection of NH RTs 102 & 121. The intersection is within an eligible Historic District and a range of project alternatives is under consideration including: the do nothing alternative, which would not meet the project's purpose and need; signalization of the intersection with the construction of left turn lanes on NH Route 102; and construction of a single lane roundabout. The build alternatives would be anticipated to result in permanent impacts that could extend outside of the current roadway right-of-way and footprint. The goal of the meeting is to discuss the potential impacts of the alternatives being considered and the anticipated effect of the alternatives on the Historic District and the individual resources at the intersection.

Corey Spetelunas explained that the project is an HSIP (Highway Safety Improvement Program) project in the middle of Chester at the intersection of Route 121 and Route 102. He explained that Route 102 is slightly more heavily travelled. The intersection has significant history of crashes with 72 crashes recorded between 2009 and 2018. The purpose of the project is to increase safety and improve capacity. The current intersection is a throughway for Route 102 with stop signs for Route 121. There is a vertical curve through the intersection that makes it difficult to see if cars are approaching the intersection. Route 121 does experience backups during peak traffic.

The project is within the Chester Historical District, which is eligible for the National Register. There are individually listed resources in 3 quadrants (Congregational Church, Stevens Memorial Hall, and the Village Cemetery) and in the 4th quadrant; the Chester General Store, two 19th century cannons and the Civil War Monument are all contributing resources to the historic district.

C. Spetelunas used Google 'drive' to show the visibility issues at the intersection. Recent improvements included installing flashing beacons on the Route 121 stop signs to try to prevent motorists from running the stop signs, but these do not seem to have measurably improved the safety of the intersection.

C. Spetelunas showed the resources in each of the quadrants and discussed the project schedule. He explained that the project team intends to attend a Public Informational Meeting in late 2021 and advertise the project in fall 2023. C. Spetelunas explained that the project is in the alternatives analysis phase and described the alternatives being considered.

- The first alternative presented was the no build alternative, which would have no impacts on resources in the project area, but would not meet the project's purpose and need.
- The second alternative presented was a 4-way stop with the existing intersection layout. This would include new stop signs on Route 102 and have very minor impacts. However, there would only be minor safety improvement and the capacity of the intersection would decrease, leading to backups on Route 102 as well as Route 121. This alternative does not meet the project's purpose and need.
- The third alternative presented was a signalized intersection with stop bars in the standard location (near the traffic signal). C. Spetelunas showed the plan and explained that this alternative would require minimal additional impervious area, primarily to accommodate a left turning west bound Route 102. Installation of the large foundations needed for the long mast arms proposed would require a lot of excavation and would have some impacts. This alternative would be anticipated to need to treat stormwater and a location has been identified that might be suitable outside of the project area near the Exeter River. The profile/vertical curve through the intersection would be addressed, which would require a retaining wall along the Steven's Hall property. A left turn lane would be added to Route 102 both for traffic traveling east and west on Route 102 through the intersection. No right turn on red would be permitted from Raymond Road or Chester Street due to sight distance. Drainage improvements would be included along the Chester Church property and along the Village Cemetery property. This alternative does meet the project's purpose and need.
- The next alternative presented was a signalized intersection with stop bars offset from the standard location (50 to 100 feet before the standard stop bar location). C. Spetelunas showed the plan and explained that this alternative would not require as much additional impervious area as the standard stop bars because truck turn aprons would not be needed. Installation of the large foundations needed for the long mast arms proposed would require a lot of excavation and would have some impacts. This alternative would be anticipated to need to treat stormwater and a location has been identified that might be suitable outside of the project area near the Exeter River. The profile/vertical curve through the intersection would be addressed, which would require a retaining wall along the Steven's Hall property. A left turn lane would be added to Route 102 both for traffic traveling east and west on Route 102 through the intersection. There is concern that the unconventional mast arm location in relation to the stop bars would confuse drivers. Also, this alternative would complicate the right turn on red movement. No right turn on red would be permitted from Raymond Road or Chester Street due to sight distance. Drainage improvements would be included along the Chester Church

property and along the Village Cemetery property. This alternative does meet the project's purpose and need.

- The last alternative presented was the roundabout, which is slightly shifted towards Steven's Hall to move impacts away from the Cemetery. The current design Requires trucks to "take a lap" to turn right due to tight turning radius to avoid impacts. Alternatively, right turns would be permitted with additional impacts. The profile/vertical curve through the intersection would be addressed, which would require a retaining wall along the Steven's Hall property. This alternative would be anticipated to need to treat stormwater and a location has been identified that might be suitable outside of the project area near the Exeter River. This option would actually increase impervious area less than the signal alternative. This alternative does meet the project's purpose and need and would minimize potential for accidents.

Liz Liacos noted the challenges with the trucks coming up Derry Road and potentially backing up in winter when there is snow and ice on the roadway. C. Spetelunas shared that both signal alternatives and the roundabout would flatten out the intersection and reduce some of the slope on Derry Road. Also, the project proposes to address drainage through the intersection, hopefully reducing ice on the roadway. Mike Dugas noted that the signal options do result in longer queues on Derry Road than the roundabout would.

L. Liacos asked for clarification of what is meant by water treatment. C. Spetelunas explained that it means stormwater treatment, treating the water that comes off of the pavement. M. Dugas noted that stormwater treatment would likely be located near the Exeter River.

L. Liacos noted that coming into the meeting she was not in favor of the roundabout, but seeing the presentation, it looks feasible in this location. Her biggest concern is the grade of the roadway on Route 102. Either direction is difficult. M. Dugas noted that because roundabouts slow down traffic, they are better for bikes and pedestrians. C. Spetelunas explained that the project does not include adding sidewalks. Jill Edelmann inquired if the area needs sidewalks? L. Liacos explained that it is not a walkable area, people only try to cross during Halloween and the Town's scarecrow event.

L. Liacos asked about taking property and M. Dugas briefly explained eminent domain, when an agreement cannot be reached with the property owner.

L. Liacos asked about vibration impacts on the historic properties. Ron Crickard explained that for some construction projects vibration monitoring is required during construction. L. Liacos asked about after construction is complete. M. Dugas explained that vibration is not often an issue after construction, more often noise levels are questioned. L. Liacos explained that it is already so noisy, she can't imagine the project would make it worse. Laura Black commented that NHDOT might look into landfill projects, which have to consider the impacts of large heavy equipment for post construction vibration

L. Liacos asked if an underpass could be considered. M. Dugas explained that an underpass would have too many impacts and far exceed the project budget, so it would not be appropriate for this type of project.

C. Spetelunas mentioned that there is a massive utility vault near Steven's Hall. M. Dugas explained the utility would be responsible for the cost to move it.

Sheila Charles brought up the report from a concerned citizen that there might be human remains outside of the cemetery. She explained no documentation could be found. L. Liacos said she is not aware of anything and offered to check with other members of the Historical Society. S. Charles explained that any excavation within 25 feet of the cemetery would require monitoring. J. Edelmann suggested GPR in the intersection and outside of the cemetery. L. Liacos agreed with that idea. She also noted that Darrel Quinn, a local resident, knows a lot about the Town's history. The group discussed a combined 1A/1B survey with GPR, avoiding shovel test pits in the cemetery, but stripping and looking.

L. Black noted that is clear which alternative has fewest potential cultural impacts. M. Dugas explained that a preferred alternative has not been selected, but the roundabout is the superior option. A decision won't be made without feedback from the Town.

J. Edelmann noted that the project should return to another meeting in the future once a preferred alternative is identified. L. Black commented that an individual inventory form for the Chester General Store might be helpful. She commented that there are likely to be 4(f) issues. L. Black noted that this is a historically important intersection, so public involvement is very important. She also recommended limiting and pulling back the project impacts as much as possible. She recommended the design team give more thought to slope impacts- in this context, grassy areas had purposes and historic elements. These grassy areas were purposed space and not just yards. She noted that this is a unique situation.

Newton 29617, X-A004(206)

Participants: Ron Crickard, Hans Weber, Dan Prehemo, Rebecca Martin, NHDOT

Continued consultation on the intersection improvement project for Rowe's Corner. The intersection has been determined to be part of a Historic District eligible for the National Register. Through coordination with the Town, the four way stop alternative has been identified as the preferred alternative. This alternative has fewer impacts outside of the roadway footprint than the roundabout alternative. It could result in permanent impacts outside of the current roadway right-of-way and footprint. The goal of the meeting is to discuss the potential impacts of the preferred alternative and the anticipated effect on the Historic District

Hans Weber explained that the project proposes improvements to the NH Route 108, Amesbury Road, and Maple Avenue intersection in Newton, NH. This intersection is known as Rowe's Corner. NH Route 108 does not stop at the intersection (through movement), while Maple Avenue and Amesbury Road have stop signs. There is a flashing beacon in the intersection. Route 108 takes a distinct curve through the intersection and there are multiple slip ramps, making the intersection confusing to unfamiliar drivers. An accident history study reported that there have been 15 crashes at the intersection in recent years. H. Weber explained that the historic district boundary extends beyond the project area, so the entire project is within the eligible historic district. A public hearing for the project is likely in the fall of 2021.

H. Weber indicated that the preferred alternative, which has support from the Town, is the four way stop with removal of the existing slip ramps. The four way stop alternative has fewer impacts in the intersection and would result in an overall reduction in the amount of pavement through the intersection. Aerial utilities would be moved outside of the intersection.

H. Weber showed a color plan and explained the proposed improvements, including truck turning aprons. He noted that the culvert on Amesbury Road of unknown age, which is not a contributing object to the historic district, will most likely be addressed as part of the project. H. Weber showed a picture from 1903 of the Rowe's Corner intersection, which was very open with very few trees.

H. Weber shared that the Project Manager for the project has retired and that some of the impacts proposed on individual properties are anticipated to be discussed with the property owners by the new Project Manager, once one is assigned.

H. Weber described impacts anticipated in each of the quadrants of the intersection proposed for the preferred alternative. In the north east quadrant of the intersection the road will be moved away from the house since a slip ramp will be removed and no impacts to the building are proposed. Slope impacts into the yard are anticipated and it is expected that two old maple trees may need to be removed. The rock wall on the property will be avoided. A well for the property is located on the opposite (south) side of Maple Avenue, but the well would not be impacted.

In the north west quadrant of the intersection no impacts are proposed to the building and the road would be moved away from the house. H. Weber showed the gravel driveway entrance to the barn, where mailboxes are located, and water is ponding. He explained that the project is proposing curbing in the intersection to capture stormwater and direct the water to a treatment area. The project team would like to investigate a paved driveway apron in this location with a 2" driveway lip to funnel the stormwater away from the driveway, which would be within the existing right-of-way. Slope impacts are anticipated to a rock garden on the other (south) side of the building and some trees on the property could be impacted by the project. A truck apron is proposed for this quadrant.

In the south west quadrant of the intersection the slip ramp would be removed. Slope impacts are proposed. South of the Rowe's Corner intersection on Amesbury Road there is an intersection with Gould's Hill Road. The roadway work would be expected to tie into the existing Amesbury Road before the property at the corner of Gould's Hill Road. The Amesbury Road culvert is just north of the intersection with Gould's Hill Road and is not contributing to the historic district. It appears to have been extended with multiple materials over time. The date of construction and the original materials are unknown. The culvert is proposed to be replaced. The culvert has a combined headwall with a small pipe that carries drainage to the stream from Gould's Hill Road. The proposed Amesbury culvert replacement would plan to accommodate the existing pipe from Gould's Hill Road and minimize impacts to that structure. There is a retaining wall just above the stream near the culvert headwall that may be impacted by the project. An old well on the property would not be impacted.

In the south east corner of the intersection there are not any buildings. In this corner there is a wetland. A storm water treatment swale is planned for this quadrant. There has been dumping of trash in this quadrant of the intersection over time. Two large oak trees immediately adjacent to Amesbury Road in this quadrant would need to be removed.

Laura Black commented on the historic district and the three small intersections in close proximity to one another. She noted that the Rowe's Corner intersection appears to have always been very broad and open. She noted that a lot of woods have come up. L. Black commented that this project proposes to narrow the intersection, which has been historically very wide, and noted that she is not sure if this rises to the level

of an adverse effect, but asked that the project team investigate ways to maintain the concept of the wide intersection on the landscape. For example, could the slip ramps be left in place as gravel paths or could the islands be brought back to be lower landscaped islands to minimize the changes to the intersection. Dan Prehemo explained that a water quality treatment swale is intended in the south east quadrant in the area where the slip ramp is located and there is not enough room there to shift the swale, as there are minimum lengths required to treat stormwater and wetlands nearby. It is unlikely that the slip ramp could be preserved. From a perspective of keeping the look of an open intersection, similar to what was shown in the 1903 photo, the water quality treatment swale will be maintained open. H. Weber noted that the north east slip ramp could be investigated for opportunities such as making a gravel path.

L. Black noted that the Town could ultimately incorporate the slip ramp into pedestrian accommodations. D. Prehemo explained that, if the Town decides to incorporate sidewalks into the intersection, they would be expected on the opposite side of the intersection. Jill Edelman suggested discussing future plans with the Town and asking their preference about leaving the slip ramp. She noted that while the slip ramps wouldn't necessarily be there, the intersection would still be a large grassed area, giving that open appearance. J. Edelman recommended asking if the Town wants sidewalks. D. Prehemo explained that the project plans were shown at the public information meeting without sidewalks. If the Town wanted sidewalks, he would have expected them to speak up at that time.

L. Black asked about coordination with the historical society. R. Martin explained that multiple communications, both snail and email, have been sent with no response. An invitation to the Cultural Resource Agency Coordination meeting was also sent via email. L. Black suggested more targeted messaging and advising that the historical society could participate in whatever capacity is convenient. D. Prehemo suggested a phone call. *

J. Edelman commented that the next step would be to complete effect sheets for the historic district showing the proposed impacts and describe impacts using the effect criteria. L. Black recommended double checking on when/why the trees that would be impacted are located where they are, were the trees planted intentionally? R. Martin asked if another meeting would be needed. J. Edelman explained that if the effects sheet results in no adverse effects and there are no questions, no more meetings would be needed. If there are questions, another meeting may be needed prior to an effect determination. If there is an adverse effect, a future meeting, which can be after NEPA, would be needed to discuss mitigation.

**Following the meeting R. Martin sent another shorter email highlighting that NHDOT has information about the historic district to share and noting that any form of communication/input would be appreciated. No response has been received to date. No phone number for the historical society is available on the historical society or Town website.*

Warner 15907, X-A001(029)

Participants: Meli Dube, Mike Mozer, Jennifer Reczek, NHDOT

The project team briefly discussed the preferred alternative and effect findings to the Davisville Village Historic District and historic bridge with the goal of finalizing the effect memo and discussing potential mitigation for the anticipated adverse effects to the district and bridge. The results of the public outreach and input from the town for their preferred mitigation was also shared.

Mike Mozer, NHDOT Bureau of Bridge Design, provided an overview and update on the project which was previously discussed at the May 14, 2020 Cultural Resource Agency Meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the anticipated effects and proposed mitigation for the preferred alternative. The existing bridge carries NH Route 127 over the Warner River in the Town of Warner and is a three-span, 120' I-Beam bridge built in 1937 as part of the WPA project replacing flood damaged structures statewide. The bridge is 25' wide and has been on the State's red list due to deck condition since 2005. The primary purpose of the project is to improve the crossing such that the bridge can be removed from the State red list and remove the current load posting, the need for which is demonstrated by the deteriorated condition of the bridge. Several meetings with the Town of Warner have been held since 2018, during which they have identified several other needs for improvements at the crossing and have indicated their preference for complete replacement using road closure and detour. This alternative would install a larger 33' wide structure with 4' sidewalks, remove the existing bridge piers, replace substandard guardrail, improve Dustin Road intersection geometry, and improve drainage and water quality in the vicinity of the Warner River. This is currently considered the Department's preferred alternative and will most fully meet the needs of the Town and the Department in the most cost effective manner over the longest timeframe. Replacement with closures allows for improved safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, addresses concerns about increased traffic volumes and larger fire engines, reduces impacts to surrounding properties and meets the Department's needs for removing the load posting and removing the bridge from the State's red list.

Meli Dube, NHDOT Bureau of Environment, provided details on the resources in the project area protected by Section 106, survey efforts, anticipated effects and proposed mitigation. The project area is located within the Davisville Village Historic District, which was determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A, C and D. There are four properties in the Area of Potential Effect that have structures which are considered contributing features to the Historic District that have proposed work outside of the State right-of-way. In the northeast quadrant of the bridge crossing, improvements to the Dustin Road intersection alignment will require minor slope work on Parcel 03-080 which contains the USGS Flood Level Monitoring Station construction in 1940 as well as Parcel 03-083 which contains the Paine and Mary Davis House constructed in 1811. All impacts to these properties are limited to slope work along the edge of right-of-way and will not impact any structures or alter the use of the property. In the southwest quadrant of the bridge crossing, construction of a stormwater treatment swale will require permanent drainage easements on Parcel 03-079 containing the Seth and Flora Low House constructed in 1840, as well as Parcel 03-064 containing the James David House/The Amesbury constructed in 1835. All impacts to these properties will be limited to lawn/wooded area and will not impact any structures or alter the use of the property. Additionally, an Archaeological Phase 1A/1B investigation occurred in the areas of potential excavation associated with these work efforts and it was determined that there are no sensitive areas that may be disturbed, though the Davis Mills Complex is situated immediately to the east of the project area. The bridge itself has been inventoried and has been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C, and is also considered a contributing feature to the Historic District.

The Department is anticipating the following effects to the resources discussed above due to impacts associated with the currently preferred replacement alternative:

1. Historic District: Removal and replacement of the bridge would result in an Adverse Effect due to removal of a contributing feature and changes in aesthetic of the district. There is no anticipated

adverse effect associated with the Dustin Road intersection alignment improvements or the installation of the stormwater treatment swale as no character defining feature of the district will be impacted and use of the properties will not change.

2. Bridge: Removal and replacement of the bridge would result in an Adverse Effect to the bridge as an individually eligible resource due to complete loss of the historic I-beam structure.

The Department presented this information, including a description of the resources and anticipated adverse effects, to the Town on May 18, 2021 with the purpose of soliciting input on potential mitigation for the effects. The options presented at the time included a pamphlet (for distribution to public), informational panels (for display in town buildings), PowerPoint presentation (for historical society use), full length report (for historical society use), on-site plaque (deemed not feasible as this is not a tourist area and would be unsafe) and a booklet. The Department's preferred mitigation option would be a booklet which would capture the story of the Historic District and bridge in an aesthetically catching and accessible manner for distribution to the general public of the Town of Warner. The Town has not yet provided their feedback and the Department is seeking DHR's input on what would be considered appropriate mitigation.

Laura Black, NHDHR, advised that there are two different stories to tell associated with the two distinct features being impacted- the Historic District and the bridge as an individual resource. Appropriate mitigation would involve up to two different products/deliverables. Laura agreed that a booklet would be appropriate for telling the story of the Historic District and the development of Davisville, including the role of the bridge as a contributing feature and as part of the infrastructure pattern of the district over time. The second product should focus on the story of the bridge as part of the WPA program and the bigger picture of the State program and response to a natural disaster, and also the significance as an individually eligible feature and uniquely engineered feature in NH. Laura indicated it would be preferable to stay away from formal, long technical reports and to keep the information digestible and accessible by the general public. It was discussed that creation of a PowerPoint presentation, website media or information panels may be appropriate to hand off to the Town for them to create a presentation to the public during one of the Towns annual events.

At this time, the Department plans to submit the Effect Memo, which reflects the effects described above, shortly. We will continue to work with the Town to establish the mitigation plan using the feedback described above and will include those details in the MOU. Laura requested that details about the content of each deliverable be included in the MOU. Laura inquired as to whether FHWA has been involved and Meli confirmed that they have and that the Section 4(f) evaluation is underway.